**Notes to Accompany Mushrooms Slides**

**1**. **Screen Image** - Driving Question: *What is the title of the poem?*

**Teacher talk** - Explain to students that they are going to reassemble a poem to determine its title and in so doing they are going to deepen their close reading and critical appreciation skills. The challenge is to decide what the poem is about . The key learning habits will be: open-mindedness, collaboration, link-making and imagining.

**Student Action** - In pairs, students are given a single stanza at random from Plath’s poem - they are told that there are 11 in total - they are given two minutes to explore meaning and to generate some hypotheses about what the poem is about. They turn their stanza face down, stand up, leave their partner and meet with as many other students as possible to ask them what their stanza was about - they have two minutes to glean from others. They return to their seats and share what they have found out with their partner.

**Commentary** - Students are being required to read closely and distil their thinking. When they leave their stanza behind, they have to hold ideas in their heads and listen actively to others - posing exploratory questions as they gather fresh ideas. On return to their pair they are being encouraged to adapt and revise their initial thinking.

**2. Screen image** - Emerging hypotheses…

**Teacher talk** - The teacher asks students what they are beginning to think about the poem’s subject. S/he types up emerging ideas on the screen - these often range widely from *War* to *Exploitation* to *Poverty* to *Snow* to *Trees* to *Seeds* and so on. The teacher is inclusive of all suggestions and non-committal. The teacher provides the entire poem - cut into its 11 stanzas in a plastic envelope. Students are required to think about how best to make sense of the poem. They have two minutes to generate an outline plan of action which they share with other members of the class before opening their envelopes. Suggested actions often include: *Decide on a suitable opening…decide how the poem will end…group stanzas together that seem to be on the same topic…look at the punctuation to see if some stanzas run into each other…*

**Student Action** - Reflective thinking is essential at this point - students are thinking ahead of action and preparing themselves to make links and generate hypotheses.

**Commentary** - Teachers will need to ensure that students take time to consolidate reflective thought and are dissuaded from rushing to action too soon.

**4. Screen image** - Generate - Sort - Connect

**Teacher talk** - Students are given ten minutes to generate ideas - sort them - and connect them together. They will be moving the stanzas around and remaining *open-minded* and *flexible.* In four minutes, they will be set a fresh focus challenge.

**Student Action** - Manipulation of the stanzas to create order and sense in line with the Driving Question: *What’s the title of the poem?*

**Commentary** - action should urgent and purposeful with the need for the teacher to encourage reflection. Teacher circulates to nudge and prompt those who are making less progress than others. The teacher avoids leading questions and the temptation and steer students towards the *right answer.* All possible solutions are welcome provided they can be justified.

**5. Screen image** - How does the poem start…and How does it end?

**Teacher talk** - After four minutes, students are challenged to decide on the opening and closing stanza - they have one minute to distil their thinking and will have to justify their choice. The teacher does not reveal Plath’s opening and close at this stage. Teacher asks what they are now thinking the title might be - has this changed.

**Student action** - Decision making as required with the need to provide reasons that are persuasive and not anodyne. Pairs are selected to explain their choices - cross-class discourse, questioning and disagreement (or agreement) is encouraged.

**Commentary** - Teacher challenges and probes so that students can present clear reason that show a deeper reading of the poem and its intent.

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**7. Screen image** - What do the metaphors in the poem suggest?

**Teacher talk** - Students are urged to continue working on the poem and to focus their attention on metaphoric language.

**Student action** - they adapt the poem but also note on paper, the metaphors they are noticing and what they see to suggest about the poem’s subject matter.

**Commentary** - Students are being required to be forensic and hypothetical in their reading of the poem at this stage.

**8. Screen image** - I think this…you think that…

**Teacher talk** - Teacher stresses *open-mindedness, compromise* and *decision making* at this stage in the lesson - students reform in fresh pairings with a two minute deadline to agree on the title of the poem and an order that makes sense to them.

**Student action** - one person stays with the poem as sorted while another joins someone else. They look at what is on the table and come to a collective decision - in three minutes - about what the poem is about. They will need to justify their collective decision or agree to differ and be able to represent their new partner’s point of view whilst being able to justify their own opinions.

**Commentary** - Some key reflective and collaborative learning habits are being progressed at this point in the lesson and attention could be drawn to this as the wider purpose of the lesson. The teacher might engineer the new pairings to ensure the right levels of support and challenge for individuals.

**9. Screen image** - the first and last stanzas of the poem (revealed one by one)

**Teacher talk** - The poet’s decision about how the poem starts and ends is shown and students are asked to respond to this knowledge. Do they change their order or do they wish to stay with their choices and justify their selection?

**Student action** - Consolidation, review and revision - the students adapt accordingly and now have to be decisive about the poem’s order and its title.

**Commentary** - The challenge is for students always to justify their reading and think differently as meaning emerges.

**10. Screen image** – mushrooms

**Teacher talk** - Allow students to realise that the poem is called Mushrooms and now to read the poem with that in mind. Require them to analyse the effectiveness of the metaphors to describe the process of overnight growth. Students note on paper those descriptions that they think to be particularly effective.

**Student action** - Even closer reading of the poem as they link the metaphors to the poet’s subject matter and identify strengths in the writing - and expressions that don’t quite work or could be improved.

**Commentary** - Students’ reading is now moving towards a critical appreciation of the poem - its structure, diction, syntax and rhythm.

**11. Screen image** - But is it about something else?

**Teacher talk** - Students asked to consider if the poem is using Mushrooms as a metaphor for something else. Take suggestions. Provoke the class: Sylvia Plath is often seen as a feminist writer - could this poem (written in the early 1960s) be read as a feminist poem?

**Student action** - In groups, generate hypotheses, make links and justify thinking.

**Commentary** - Students are now being stretched to *think outside the box* and see the wider relevance of poetry - beyond accurate descriptions of the visible world.

**12. Screen image** - So how could we write about this poem?

**Teacher talk** - If we were to capture our reading of this poem, what would we want to write about and how would we organise our thoughts. Teacher requires students to work in groups of four to generate their own plans for writing about the poem.

**Student action** - Group-work planning of a piece of writing that sums up what the poem is about and how effective it is. They produce a spider diagram and flow diagram to sort their ideas that they will refine with their teacher in the next lesson.